PANCH KAKAAR—PANCH USOOL

by

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Sri Guru Gobind Singh College

CHANDIGARH

The Chairman and members of the Governing Body, Principal Shergill, Staff and students of Sri Guru Gobind Singh College, Chandigarh :

I am grateful to you for inviting me to address the college on the Annual Day of the College. I know that this college has made tremendous and phenomenal progress during the last six years. Though six years is hardly an adequate period for measuring the stature and competence of any educational institution, yet the high standards attained so far and the notable achievements of this college both in academics and sports compare favourably with some of the best institutions in the country. I am sure that this college will be a pace-setter for good colleges and will make a notable contribution to the enrichment of higher education in India.

This college is named after the Tenth Guru and this throws a great responsibility on the teachers and students of the college. Guru Gobind Singh embodies in himself the ideal of a perfect man, a saint-soldier, a creative artist, a shephered of his flock and, above all, a servant of the people. In his time, he met the challenges of injustice, tyranny and corruption. He has left for us a trail of glory. Are we ready to follow in his foot-steps ?

Guru Gobind Singh stands for certain values. I would, on the analogy of *Panch Piyara* and *Panch Kakaar*, call it *Panch Usool*. These five important values are (*i*) democratic socialism (*ii*) courage, (*iii*) active optimism (*Charadi Kala*), (*iv*) Self-respect (*v*) Service and sacrifice. Let us now analyse the implications of these values and see how they will help in individual and social progress.

Democratic Socialism :

We live in a world where physical barriers have been overcome thus knitting nations into economic communities and thus leading to

an emerging world organisation. This, along with the need of survival, in view of the powerful engines of destruction developed by scientific technology, has brought all kinds of men close to one another. Guru Gobind Singh in his time emphasised the need of closer cooperation among different groups because basically mankind is just one unit. He said :

> "All men are the same, although they appear different under different local influences. The light and the dark, the ugly and the beautiful, the Hindus and the Muslims, have developed themselves according to the fashions of different countries."

In India today, we witness so many conflicts due to regional, social and religious differences. If we want to restore peace in this sub-continent, we shall have to live together as members of a great family, each having his own share to contribute to the common good.

Democratic socialism is not a mere slogan and yet it will remain a slogan if we all do not work for it. We have to usher a new socio-economic order which provides for basic human needs and opportunities for individual progress. Anything that stands in the way, may be a political system or a social pattern, will have to be scrapped in order to bring about a welfare State. For this very purpose, Guru Gobind Singh had to fight on two fronts, one against the fanatic Mughal rule and the other against the feudal order of the hill chiefs. Raja Bhimchand and Emperor Aurangzeb stood for anti-democratic system which was motivated by personal glory and a lust for power. Therefore, all right-thinking people had to be organised to oppose this undemocratic system. Similarly in our own time, we shall have to carry on a crusade against all those who oppose the democratic way of life and who support an obscurantist or sectarian social system.

True democracy leads to patriotism and respect for man as man. Guru Gobind Singh gave to his people a sense of national solidarity.

He said—"He alone is a Sikh who lives according to the Sikh principles. That sort of Sikh is my master and I am his disciple." He conferred secular succession on the *Panth*. Even today crucial decisions are taken by the people as a whole in the form of a resolution or *Gurmatta*. He admitted that all his achievements in various fields were due to the support of the masses. By inspiring the Sikhs he brought out their inner nobility which in turn helped the community to grow from strength to strength.

Courage :

Guru Gobind Singh's career is a great lesson in courage. At the age of nine he allowed his father to face martyrdom. Even after leaving Chamkaur, he walked undaunted through the Machiwara jungle ; he had to sleep on a bed of stones and eat wild berries, but never for a minute he doubted his strength and conviction. The loss of his four sons at the hands of the Moghuls did not break his spirit. Rather it strengthened his resolve and doubled his moral courage :

> "Thought shall be the harder,
> Mind the stronger,
> As our might lessens."

Moreover, Guru Gobind Singh believed that man is largely an architect of his own fate. He is not a weakling or a puppet dancing to the tune of a dictator or a ruler. He has potentialities in him which can enable him to convert his stumbling blocks into stepping stones. When the man of action girds up his loins, the difficulties melt away as ice does under the rays of the sun. His saga of courage under adverse circumstances is a great lesson for us, which will strengthen our spirit to face the struggles of life boldly. Do we have to be afraid when the example of Guru Gobind Singh is e to inspire us ?

Active Optimism :

Guru Gobind Singh was an embodiment of victory and optimism. He did not subscribe to the principle of "might is right". If he had

done so, he would have surrendered peacefully to Emperor Aurangzeb. But he believed in "right is might" and was prepared to defend it at the cost of his life. His fearlessness was inspired by purity and nobility, truth and love. He held fast to the conviction that this world is based on the moral law. Though evil may seem to prosper for a while, ultimately it is bound to fail. Look at the vast array of dictators and tyrants who have been obscured by the lapse of time and been completely forgotten. It is this basic belief in the victory of good over evil, which should motivate our conduct and action. The students should do what they think right and not be guided by old traditions and superstitions. It is this faith in the moral victory which will boost up their morale and make them face hardships cheerfully.

Self Respect :

Another value which Guru Gobind Singh gave to us in abundant measure is self-respect. He believed in the dignity of the individual and his right of self-respect. Psychologists today affirm that unless man has a sense of identity he cannot rise to his full stature. The individual and his development is important in itself because there can be no social progress unless the individuals get the opportunities for advancement. Unfortunately, in these days of democracy, the individual is likely to be forgotten and may get sub-merged in the group. I think it is time we realise the dignity of the in ividual—the dignity of the teacher as well as the student. He must have his basic freedom and his legitimate place in society. We talk of the dignity of the teaching profession and yet pay the teacher much less than what his qualifications justify. In the same way we deny facilities to the student for his studies and come down upon him with a heavy hand when he protests or demonstrates for his rights. Undoubtedly, discipline is necessary in an educational institution, yet we must not deny the legitimate demands of teachers and students and go to the length of punishing them because we are unable to redress their grievances or provide the facilities that they need.

Service and Sacrifice :

The final value symbolised by Guru Gobind Singh is the service of mankind Today there is a current 'slogan-service before self.' But do we practise it in daily life ? Guru Gobind Singh waged wars with the Mughals to protect the weak and the down-trodden. He did not crave a kingdom for himself. All his life he worked for the good of the masses because he thought that the service of God's creation is true devotion and prayer. He was the embodiment of sacrifice. How joyfully he suffered many privations and persecutions. He encouraged his Sikhs to be ready for sacrifice. "He alone is to be recognised as brave who fights for the cause of down-trodden and who may be torn into pieces and hacked to death, but does not give up his struggle for the cause". This is the moral courage, the dignity of self-sought suffering which made one Sikh equal to one-and-a-quarter lakh of ordinary men. Life is not *Ahmisa*, it is a struggle. Action not inertia, enterprise not idleness, loyalty not wealth is the ideal of the Sikh.

The goals and symbols of the Khalsa :

Guru Gobind Singh created a new type of perfect man—the Khalsa—the superman of the future. In him, he combined the twin ideal of *Bhakti* and *Shakti* ; goodness must defend itself for survival ; the use of force is justifiable when negotiations fail. The Khalsa was created in order to support moral values. This fearlessness of the spirit emerged out of the baptism of steel which turned carpenters and cobblers into great warriors. They were ready to lay down their lives for a worthy cause.

Guru Gobind Singh gave five symbols to the Khalsa and each one of them has its importance and purpose in life. The first symbol is that of unshorn hair or *Kesh* which has been regarded as a symbol of saintliness. Guru Nanak started the practice of keeping hair unshorn. The keeping of the hair is an indication of living in harmony with the will of God. The Guru regarded the shaving of hair as an interference in Nature's way and considering oneself wiser than God. The

keeping of hair is very important because without it the Khalsa becomes an apostate. The second symbol called the *Kanga* or the comb is necessary for keeping the hair clean and tidy. The third symbol is knicker (*Kacch*) is regarded as an emblem of chastity and purity. Moreover, it ensures the briskness of action. It is also an economic underwear and a mark of perpetual readiness and agility. The fourth symbol is that of the sword (*Kirpan*) ; it is a token of courage and adventure. The sword can be useful in vindicating one's honour but it must be noted that the sword is to be used for the purpose of defence and not for the offence. The wearing of the sword gives the Khalsa a martial appearance. The fifth symbol is the bracelet (*Kara)* ; it indicates that the Sikh is a slave of the Guru. When the Sikh looks at the bracelet on his hand, he will think twice before doing an evil deed. These symbols are essential for preserving the corporate life of the community and fostering the sentiment of brotherhood. They make a Khalsa look exactly like Guru Gobind Singh and they prompt him to act and behave like the Guru.

The Sikhs should know the value and importance of the symbols. They have an intrinsic value of their own and also their significance in the organisational set-up. If a Sikh wants to work in an organisation he must keep up the disciplinary forms of the group. Just as we may have a good fighter without military drill and uniform but that does not minimise the need of the regular army, in the same way the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh stick to the uniform and the symbols commanded by him and find them a great aid in maintaining unity and spirit of comradeship. These symbols have helped the Sikhs in main aining their identity and keeping the spirit of the Khalsa alive. Along with the maintenance of five symbols, an exemplary life of *Rahat* is also essential. Abstinence from tobacoo, *halal* meet, narcotics and adultery is a part of the discipline of Khalsa. The code of conduct laid down by Guru Gobind Singh is no doubt difficult, but that is what the Guru wanted it to be. So long as the Khalsa maintains the symbols it will march to glory ; when it shows indifference to them, its lustre will fade away.

The outward five symbols were seconded by the five rules of life laid down for the Khalsa, namely *Nam*, *Dan*, *Ishnan*, *Kirt Karna* and *Wand Chhakna*. *Nam* implies the remembrance of God and getting in tune with the Divine spirit. *Dan* implies sharing of one's things to eliminate selfishness. *Ishnan* implies the cleanliness of the body which is the temple of God *Kirt Karna* stands for dignity of labour and earning one's livelihood by honest ways. *Wand Chhakna* is the equitable distribution of the fruits of labour So the Guru's teaching provided practical and fruitable way of life.

Guru Gobind Singh defined the Khalsa thus:

> "He is of the Khalsa,
> Who speaks evil of none,
> Who combats in the battle,
> Who gives in charity,
> Who destroys his enemy,
> Who subdues his passions,
> Who does not yield to superstition,
> Who is vigilant day and night."

Guru Gobind Singh's *Amrit* has relevance for the 20th century. Man's mind is still in chains. He is ruled by the politicians ; his mind is enslaved by popular heresies, He cannot think, he cannot act on his own. The *Amrit* of Guru Gobind Singh gives us the courage of right thinking and right action, because imitation and regimentation imply the annihilation of the human mind. India needs brave people, people of adventure, imagination and vision to meet the challenges of the modern age. Pulpit-politicians may suggest stop-gap remedies for chronic ailments through their slogans, but the real cure for our maladies lies in improving our character and doing the tasks honestly and diligently. The present evils of corruption, hypocrisy and discrimination can be over-come with hard work and moral courage. I congratulate those who have entered the fold of Guru Gobind Singh on this auspicious day and hope that they will follow his inspiring example and work for the progress and regeneration of our country.

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